

## Perfect Christmas Sugar Cookies

### INGREDIENTS

1 cup butter, softened  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 large egg  
1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla  
3 cups all-purpose flour  
1-1/4 teaspoons baking powder



### METHOD

Beat together butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla, mix until just combined. Add flour and baking powder in intervals. Caution: the dough will seem as if doesn't have enough moisture but continue to mix with mixer until combined (it will come together when chilled). Resist the temptation to add more moisture because you'll lose the perfect texture of the cookies. Divide the dough into four equal parts, shape into four disks, wrap with plastic wrap and refrigerate about an hour or until firm. Preheat oven to 375 F. Lightly grease baking sheets or line with parchment paper or a non-stick baking mat. Roll out dough between 2 sheets of waxed paper, about 1/4 inch thick for crispier cookies and 1/3 inch thick for softer cookies. Cut out shapes with cookie cutters and place on prepared baking sheets. Bake for 7-8 minutes or until edges just start to turn a golden color. For softer cookies, do not allow the cookies to take on color. Remove from oven, let cool for one minute and then transfer to wire rack. Allow cookie sheet to cool thoroughly before placing uncooked dough on it. Decorate cookies with colored sprinkles or frosting or any decoration.

Can be stored in freezer undecorated for 2 months. Dough also freezes well.

Yield varies greatly depending on how thin you roll out the dough and how large your cookie cutters are, but an overall guideline is 24 cookies.

Makes about 24

## BAKLAVA



### INGREDIENTS

#### Filling

500 gr. walnuts, coarsely chopped 60 gr. sugar 1 teaspoon cinnamon

#### Pastry

500 gr. phyllo pastry 180 gr. unsalted butter, melted

#### Syrup

230 gr. caster sugar 300 ml water 2 cinnamon sticks 2 teaspoons lemon juice  
some lemon peel 2 tablespoons honey

## METHOD

Mix all the filling ingredients in a bowl.

Liberally butter the base and sides of an elongated or round baking dish. Measure the length of the fylo against the baking dish roughly and, allowing 2 cm extra approximately for shrinkage, cut to length with a sharp knife. Brush each layer of fylo with melted butter and spread over the base of the container as evenly as possible. Once you have used 5 layers of pastry, sprinkle a thin layer of filling all over the surface and add 3 more layers. Sprinkle a thin layer of filling and place 2 more sheets of fylo on top. Sprinkle on all the remaining filling, spreading it evenly, and cover with 7-8 more layers of fylo, brushing individually with butter. Fold any excess pastry on either of the sides over the filling and brush it with butter. Brush the top layer liberally with butter in order to get it crisp and golden. Trim any excess pastry with a small sharp knife, keeping in mind that it will also shrink. Cut the top layers of fylo carefully, either diagonally into diamond shapes or straight, which will result in square or elongated pieces. Be careful not to cut right down to the base, but only the top layers. This is done in order to make cutting and lifting the pieces out, once it is cooked, much easier and efficient. Using the tips of four fingers, sprinkle drops of water all over the surface and cook it in a preheated oven, gas no.5/ 375 grades F / 190 grades C, for 15 minutes; lower the heat to gas no.4/ 350 grades F/ 180 grades C and cook for a further 20 minutes.

In the meantime, prepare the syrup. Place all the syrup ingredients, apart from the honey, in a saucepan and stir to dissolve the sugar. Simmer for 6-8 minutes, add the honey and simmer for a further 5 minutes until it thickens slightly. Let the baklava cool down then pour the hot but not boiling syrup slowly all over, through a strainer. Let it stand and absorb the syrup.

## Easy Christmas Bread Pudding

### Ingredients:

- 2 cups milk
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla
- 3 slices bread, buttered and quartered



### Cooking Instructions:

1. Mix milk, eggs, sugar and vanilla with a large spoon in a medium-size bowl until well blended.
2. Put mixture in a 9-inch pie plate.
3. Spread slices of buttered bread on top.
4. Bake at 175° for 30 minutes or until lightly browned and firm.

For a thicker pudding, add more bread. For more of a custard use less bread. Raisins may be added if desired.

# Scones

## Ingredients:

- 225g self raising flour
- A pinch of salt
- 55g butter
- 25g caster sugar
- 150ml milk



## Cooking Instructions:

1. Heat the oven to 220°. Lightly grease a baking sheet.
2. Mix together the flour and salt and rub in the butter.
3. Stir in the sugar and then the milk to get a soft dough.
4. Turn on to a floured work surface and knead very lightly. Pat out to a round 2cm thick. Use a 5cm cutter to stamp out rounds and place on a baking sheet. Lightly knead together the rest of the dough and stamp out more scones to use it all up.
5. Brush the tops of the scones with a little milk. Bake for 12-15 minutes until well risen and golden.
6. Cool on a wire rack and serve with butter and good jam and maybe some clotted cream.

# Easy Christmas Pudding

**Time:** 20 min prep, 4.5 hr cook

**Serves:** 8

## Ingredients:

- 500g mixed dried fruit
- 1/2 cup brandy
- 2 cups plain flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 teaspoons mixed spice
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 2 teaspoons bicarb soda



## Cooking Instructions:

1. Lightly grease and line a 6-8 cup steamer and line the base with paper. Combine the dried fruit and the brandy in a bowl and stand for 15 min.
2. Sift over the flour, sugar and spice. Dissolve margarine and bicarb soda in 1 1/2 cups boiling water. Add the combined liquids to the dry ingredients and mix well. Pour mixture into the steamer and allow to stand overnight.
3. Place the steamer into a pan on a rack and add enough water to come 2/3 up the sides of the basin. Bring to the boil and cover. Steam for 4 1/2 hr. Allow to cool, wrap

well in plastic and then foil and refrigerate until required. Reheat by steaming for 1 hr and serve with custard, ice-cream or cream.

## Fruit Trifle

### ingredients

- 2 bananas, sliced
- 4 tablespoons orange juice
- 1 packet trifle sponges
- 4 tablespoons Cointreau
- 1 (500g) tub vanilla custard
- 1 (700g) tub raspberry jelly, cut into small, thin slices
- 2 (450g) punnets strawberries, hulled and quartered
- 1 (225g) punnet blueberries



### Cooking Instructions:

1. Combine bananas with orange juice (this will help stop the banana from going brown).
2. Arrange the trifle sponges in the base of a serving bowl to form an even layer, cutting to size if necessary. Sprinkle the sponge with half the Cointreau. Pour half the vanilla custard evenly over the sponge. Layer with half the jelly, then half the bananas, strawberries and blueberries in the bowl. Repeat these layers starting with another layer of sponge, then cover and chill until serving.